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## C.I.A. ISSUE INJECTED INTO INDIA ELECTION

Report That Cabinet Minister Was  
an Agent for the U.S. Sets Off  
a Campaign Controversy

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NEW DELHI, Nov. 19—A passage in a recently published American book reporting that the United States Central Intelligence Agency had an Indian Cabinet minister as an agent eight years ago has provoked campaign charges and innuendoes, calls for an inquiry and at least the appearance of indignation.

Allegations of involvement by United States and Soviet secret services in Indian political life are part of the campaign ritual here and cries of "foreign money!" and "foreign interests!" often have the same impact as repeated cries of woe.

This time, however, there is an added dramatic dimension since five of the 14 people who were in the 1971 Cabinet are now actively involved in the campaign, some of them as bitter rivals. Prime Minister Charan Singh said last week he was ordering an investigation of the information brought to light on two pages of the book, "The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the C.I.A.," by Tom Powers, published by Alfred A. Knopf.

When the Prime Minister was asked whether he was now able to identify the C.I.A. spy described by Mr. Powers, he replied, "That gentleman is not in my Cabinet." Three members of the present Cabinet were also in the Government headed eight years ago by Indira Gandhi.

### Issue Raised by Mrs. Gandhi

It was Mrs. Gandhi who brought the passage to public attention here in her campaign to replace Mr. Singh as Prime Minister. Mr. Singh, who was not in her Cabinet, has picked up the theme and today challenged Mrs. Gandhi to name the spy.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's closest political ally, Raj Narain, told reporters in Lucknow, "Jagjivan Ram may be that Cabinet minister." Mr. Ram, who is now the leader of the Janata Party and was Defense Minister in 1971, is the third challenger for the post of Prime Minister in the elections to be held in January. So far he has not responded to the charge.

The section of Mr. Powers's book that has aroused such interest here is a virtual aside intended to illustrate how hard it was for the American intelligence agency to protect the identity of its sources because of White House leaks.

He noted that in a report to President Richard M. Nixon in August 1971 there was a reference to an agent in the Indian Cabinet. In the report, this person was cited as explaining that the Soviet Union had signed a treaty of friendship with India in the hope of deterring Indian recognition of Bangladesh, which was then fighting for independence from West Pakistan.

Mr. Powers said that the substance of this report had been published by The New York Times and that Mr. Helms, then the C.I.A. director, protested that a leak from the White House had placed the agent's life in jeopardy. Mr. Powers added that the "agent continued to report from inside the Indian Cabinet, apparently unaware that he might have been compromised."

However, four months later, in December, the story had a different ending. Mr. Powers wrote that Henry A. Kissinger asked for an assessment of whether India would intervene in the Bangladesh war with an attack on West Pakistan. A day later, according to Mr. Powers, "the C.I.A. case officer handling the Indian politician in Gandhi's Cabinet in New Delhi was told that a decision had just been reached to attack in the west."

The raw report from the field was routed to the White House where, Mr. Powers wrote, it was widely read and where, he said, it was leaked with other documents to Jack Anderson, the columnist. Information that found its way into Mr. Anderson's column apparently did compromise the Indian source. Mr. Powers cites an intelligence agency official as saying: "He told us to go to hell."

### Book Not Available in India

Mr. Powers's book is not available in India. The passages concerning the spy in the Cabinet were brought to public attention on Nov. 9 by Mrs. Gandhi during a campaign stop in Kanpur. She told of the report in the book, said she had been mailed copies of the key section and added that the account confirmed what she had once been told by Mr. Kissinger.

Since the disclosure of a spy in her Cabinet might in the context of a political campaign reflect badly on her leadership, diplomats and others here wondered why Mrs. Gandhi, who has a reputation for shrewdness, raised the issue. One answer that was suggested was that she felt it might reflect even more severely on certain former allies who are her current adversaries.

For example, it was noted that the 1971 Cabinet included Y. B. Chavan, who is now Mr. Singh's Deputy Prime Minister, Chidambaram Subramaniam, Mr. Singh's Minister of Defense, and Dr. Karan Singh, the present Minister of Education. The three were then close associates of Mrs. Gandhi but are now at odds with her and she is known to regard them as apostates guilty of betrayal.

And then, as one cynic noted, "Mrs. Gandhi, too, was a member of her own Cabinet."

Asked for a response to the information in the book, a spokesman for the United States Embassy here said: "We never comment on intelligence matters."

In a more informal mood, however, he volunteered that he was not sure whether the account by Mr. Powers contained new information or whether "it was an echo or recycling of some old Jack Anderson column coming around once more."

The injection of the C.I.A. issue into the campaign is the newest variation on the general theme of foreign interference in Indian affairs. Last spring it was introduced by Mrs. Gandhi's opponents, who cited a passage in a book by Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The former United States Ambassador to India, now a New York Senator, had written that a check of embassy files here showed that the intelligence agency had twice helped finance Congress Party campaigns, once reportedly turning over money to Mrs. Gandhi.